

Government Committed to Reducing Crime Rate

PRIME MINISTER the Most Hon. Andrew Holness says the Government is committed to bringing the murder rate down.

In his 2020 New Year's address, Mr. Holness pointed out that it is only in this last decade that any serious policy and legislative reforms have been undertaken and certainly within this term that serious budgetary, manpower and technological upgrades have been made.

"All Jamaicans should take hope that with sound policy, programmes and plans we can reduce mur-



Prime Minister the Most Hon. Andrew Holness

ders, but it will take a long-term concerted and united commitment to stick with the plan," he stated.

The Prime Minister informed that the Government will be taking steps to build out the national security apparatus.

"This fiscal year will see the largest allocation of \$5.28 billion to equip the police force with cutting-edge technology to enhance their ability to detect, record, respond and prevent crimes in the society," Mr. Holness said.

"This year, the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) will receive the first set of purpose-built police cars fitted with tracking devices and on-board computers. The JCF's

radio and communication system is being improved, the long talked about electronic station diary will start implementation, and police stations right across Jamaica are being refurbished, or built anew," he added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Holness said he was confident in the Government's plan to secure Jamaica, as for the first time "Jamaica is engaged in building a National Security architecture fit for the times that will deal with domestic threats, but will also deal effectively with our air and maritime space and borders."

Jamaica's Economic Expansion Continues

THE STATISTICAL Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) is reporting third-quarter 2019 calendar year economic growth of 0.6 per cent, from July to September, relative to the corresponding period the previous year.

dating back to 1997 when quarterly measurements commenced surpassing the previous period of nine consecutive quarters.

In a statement on January 2, STATIN said the September 2019 quarter figure resulted from 1.2 per cent growth in the services industries, despite a one per cent contraction in the goods producing industries which saw all sectors, except manufacturing, which grew by 4.9 per cent, declining.

The Institute indicated that growth was achieved in all eight service industry sectors, with finance and insurance services – 3.4 per cent, and hotels and restaurants – 2.5 per cent, leading the way.

Contraction of the goods producing industries was, primarily, consequent on lower levels of output in: mining and quarrying, down 17.6 per cent; construction, down 2.1 per cent; and agriculture, forestry and fishing, down 0.1 per cent.

Meanwhile, Dr. Clarke said the projection is for economic growth for the 2020/21 financial year to return to levels above one per cent.



Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke

This out-turn is 0.3 per cent higher than the Planning Institute of Jamaica's (PIOJ) estimate, as announced during the agency's quarterly briefing last November.

Minister of Finance and the Public Service, Dr. the Hon. Nigel Clarke, noted that the figure represents the 19th consecutive quarter of economic growth for Jamaica.

Additionally, he said it is the longest unbroken stretch,

A 'December to Remember' for Tourism

TOURISM MINISTER, Hon. Edmund Bartlett, says the industry is poised to record increases of 10 per cent in earnings and 1.7 per cent for visitor arrivals for 2019.

These projections, he said, are based on preliminary out-turns for December.

He told **JIS News** that the figures, which will translate into a US\$400-million increase in earnings and 181,000 more visitors, relative to the corresponding period in 2018/19, are a direct result of "the best December ever" in Jamaica's tourism history.

"This was a December to remember. The airports were simply bursting at the



Minister of Tourism, Hon. Edmund Bartlett (left), greets Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, Trafalgar Travel Limited, Conrad Graham, during a function held recently.

seams. We have never seen these kinds of

Jamaica recorded US\$3.3 million in earnings and 4.3 million in arrivals in 2018.

Mr. Bartlett said Jamaicans can also take great comfort in the fact "that the best is yet to come" and that there will be no complacency or letting up in the pursuit of new markets and the building of more hotel rooms in 2020.

"We should all expect an encore or even more in 2020 based on projections. The results we have been seeing are not just mere coincidences but are based on strategic planning and hard work... and we expect to get even better results as we go along," the Minister contended.

Construction of New May Pen Fire Station to Commence in 2020/21

CONSTRUCTION OF the new May Pen Fire Station in Clarendon is expected to commence in the 2020/21 financial year.

This was disclosed by Local Government and Community Development Minister, Hon. Desmond McKenzie, during a recent press conference at the Ministry's offices in Kingston.

He also advised that discussions are far advanced for the construction of two additional fire stations, one in the Corporate Area and the other in rural Jamaica.

"Papine has been an area that has been looked at

Discussions are far advanced for the construction of two additional fire stations, one in the Corporate Area and the other in rural Jamaica.

for years as it relates to the location of a new fire station; those discussions are well advanced," the Minister said.

Additionally, Mr. McKenzie said discussions are under way to identify a location in

South Trelawny to build the other station.

"Based on the survey that was conducted by the Jamaica Fire Brigade (JFB) and the constant demand and complaints from residents, especially in that section of Trelawny, there is definitely a need for such a facility," he further stated.

Minister McKenzie said since 2016, the Government has provided more trucks and other equipment to the JFB.

"We have [also] invested a significant amount of money in upgrading fire stations across the country," he added.



Local Government and Community Development Minister, Hon. Desmond McKenzie (2nd right), in discussion with Kingston Mayor, Senator Councillor Delroy Williams (right), during a recent press briefing at the Ministry's offices on Hagley Park Road in Kingston. Others from left are National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) Executive Director, Audley Gordon, and Chairman, Dennis Chung.

KSAMC Feeds the Homeless



His Worship the Mayor of Kingston, Senator Councillor Delroy Williams (left), shares in conversation with Keith West at the Mayor's annual feeding of the homeless event at the St. William Grant Park, downtown Kingston, on January 1. The event is part of ongoing efforts to provide support and responsible care for the poorest and less fortunate, in the community by the Kingston and St. Andrew Municipal Corporation (KSAMC).

Styrofoam Ban Takes Effect

THE GOVERNMENT has imposed a ban on the local manufacture, distribution and use of expanded polystyrene foam products used in the food and beverage industry, effective January 1, 2020.

This is being done as part of initiatives to place greater focus on environmental protection as well as pollution control.

Speaking in an interview with **JIS News**, Senator Matthew Samuda said that public education has been done and he is comfortable that people are aware.

"Much like the plastic bag...we expect that some [products] will take a little while to be fully used up, but we do expect that early in the New Year you will see a marked reduction in the use of Styrofoam food containers," Senator Samuda said.

He told **JIS News** the ban on expanded poly-



Government Senator, Matthew Samuda

styrene foam products is better for the environment and for public health.

Senator Samuda also reminded Jamaicans that persons, who breach the ban, will face the full force of the law.

"We encourage people to be compliant from day one. As you would have seen... over 40 businesses have been fined since the

ban was implemented on plastic bags. We expect that a similar level of vigilance will take place from the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) and the various agencies," he said.

On January 1, 2019, a ban was placed on specific categories of single-use plastics.